

# Environmentally Preferable Cleaners

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## INTRODUCTION

The cleaners we use in our homes and offices can harm human health and the environment. According to the EPA, most people spend more than 90 percent of their time indoors; thus, exposure to indoor environmental hazards has led to many health concerns. Choosing less hazardous products can minimize harmful impacts to custodial workers, improve indoor air quality, and reduce water pollution.

Institutions have the responsibility to maintain safe environments for their employees and the public, including healthy buildings.

## STANDARDS

To aid in the selection of environmentally preferable cleaners, there are environmental standards for cleaning products that are available for use in purchasing specification and the cleaning products industry has developed new products to meet these rigorous requirements. In addition to meeting these standards, cleaning products must still fulfill the basic requirements of cost and performance.

Following are a few of these standards:

### Green Seal

[Green Seal](#), a national non-profit consensus based standard setting organization, has several standards for green cleaners:

- [GS-34 Cleaning and Degreasing Agents](#)
- [GS-37 for Industrial and Institutional Cleaners](#)

- [GS-40 for Industrial and institutional Floor Care Products](#)
- [GS-41 Hand Cleaners and Hand Soaps](#)
- [GS-42 Commercial and Institutional Cleaning Services](#)
- [GS-51 Laundry Care Products for Industrial and Institutional Use](#)
- [GS-53 Specialty Cleaning Products for Industrial and Institutional Use](#)

You can view the standards on their website and find products that have been certified to this standard. Green Seal maintains a third party certification system.

### **EcoLogo, UL Environment**

[EcoLogo](#) is a North American standard and certification program (originated in Canada) and now part of UL Environment. They have set criteria and certified various green cleaning products, from hand cleaners to floor cleaners. EcoLogo's environmental standards are verified by a third party auditor.

### **Safer Choice, US EPA**

[Safer Choice](#), formerly the Design for the Environment (DfE), is an EPA program that distinguishes safer chemical products. EPA uses rigorous criteria to ensure that Safer Choice labeled products are safer for human health and the environment. Safer Choice has approved more than 2,000 products.

## **USAGE HISTORY AND EXPERIENCE**



King County agencies have tested and used many cleaners that have been marketed as “green” with varying degrees of success. The market has improved dramatically for environmentally preferable cleaners in the past few years, as standards and certification programs have begun to emerge and more products have become certified. The use of environmental standards will help counter the unsubstantiated marketing claims, often called “greenwashing,” that can be confusing to users.

Various county facilities are being cleaned using Green Seal certified cleaners, including downtown office buildings, correctional facilities, public health clinics, transit bases and the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel. Concentrated cleaners, which are then diluted with water as appropriate for the application, yield many benefits, especially to worker health and safety as

there is reduced exposure to toxic chemicals.

FMD, Metro Transit, Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention and the Department of Public Health purchased approximately 10,500 gallons of concentrated multipurpose cleaners, soaps and disinfectants in 2012. The disinfectants aren't certified green, but the majority is hydrogen peroxide based and they are EPA registered.

FMD and Metro Transit also use chemical-free equipment that utilizes water and microfiber clothes to clean many surfaces including restrooms and stainless steel surfaces.

Additionally, FMD and Metro Transit both achieved a reduction in cost and in the quantity of chemicals used over the years because they used less product overall. FMD reduced their cost by 20 percent and reduced their usage by 60 percent mainly by switching to an advanced dilution system. Transit went from stocking 30 different products to using just two main multi-purpose cleaners.

Metro Transit also adopted the use of microfiber cleaning cloths for all cleaning operations, and report that this change saves water and performs well. The use of microfiber mops has eliminated the use of

the mop-buckets full of muddy water, as they are easily laundered where laundry facilities are available. Facilities are currently testing these, as they do not have as easy access to laundry facilities.

Metro Transit updated their cleaning policy and operations manual to outline green cleaning practices. [Metro's Green Cleaning Policy and Maintenance Manual](#) is available on-line.

The county also maintains several janitorial service contracts in addition to having county staff clean facilities. The county supplies green chemicals to the contractor for use in the facility and any additional products have to be approved by the facility manager prior to use.

## **BID AND CONTRACT LANGUAGE**

### **King County Contract**

King County no longer maintains its own contract for green cleaners. Instead, we use other local and national contracts to procure green cleaners:

### **Washington/Oregon Green Cleaners Contract**

In 2013, the State of Oregon DAS Procurement Services, in conjunction with Washington State, developed a Request for Proposal (RFP) for environmentally preferable janitorial supplies and industrial papers. Oregon awarded four cooperative Price Agreements (3400-3403) that offer thousands of low-toxicity, recycled-content, and other "green" products in seven categories:

- (1) cleaning and building maintenance chemicals
- (2) hand soaps/sanitizers
- (3) waste can liners
- (4) janitorial paper products
- (5) cleaning supplies and related custodial equipment
- (6) powered janitorial equipment, and
- (7) compostable food service ware.

Solicitation requirements and price agreements can be accessed via the [State of Washington contracts page](#).

Awarded vendors:

[Waxie Sanitary Supply](#)  
[Coastwide Laboratories](#)  
[Interline Brands](#)

### **National IPA Contract:**

Janitorial and Sanitation Supplies:

- King County uses WCP Solutions as a local distributor. The County buys green chemicals such as: Diversey Care green product lines, such as Alpha HP multi surface cleaners and other Green Seal certified products.

A sampling of other jurisdictions with contracts for environmentally preferable cleaners:

## City of Seattle's RFP for Environmentally Preferable Janitorial Cleaning Products

The City of Seattle awarded a contract for environmentally preferable janitorial cleaning products in 2010. The contracts will provide a full line of janitorial supplies, including cleaning products, cleaning supplies, paper products. It includes the full range such as deodorizers, degreasers, floor and glass care, hand cleaners, bottles and triggers, scrubbers and floor machines, buckets, cleaning supplies, toilet dispensers and paper, brooms, brushes, and mops.

The City intends the winning companies to provide advice and guidance that will direct City staff to green alternatives. The vendor would also be expected to proactively seek green supplies from their distributors. This contract requires vendors prioritize and offer green products as the first priority product choice for all orders. If a green product is not available and suitable for the purpose, the vendor may fulfill the order with a traditional product.

Please see the RFP for more information and the environmental criteria used. A summary of award is also available on the city's website.

## State of Massachusetts Environmentally Preferable Cleaning Products, Programs, Equipment and Supplies Statewide Contract

The State of Massachusetts was one of the first jurisdictions to specify and use Green Seal certified chemicals.

This is a statewide contract for environmentally preferable cleaning products, programs, equipment and supplies, including green cleaning technologies. This is a multi-state contract available to Connecticut, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont in cooperation with the lead state of Massachusetts. (The states of New Hampshire and Maine are also eligible to join).

## City/County of San Francisco, California

Approved products list for environmentally preferable cleaning products (and other products) that meet San Francisco's health & environmental requirements.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

[Responsible Purchasing Network Cleaning Purchasing Guide](#)

[Green Chemistry Procurement Guidelines– State of Oregon Policy](#)

[Green Screen for Greener Chemicals Alternative Toxics Assessment](#)

## VENDOR INFORMATION

Current King County vendors:

- [WCP Solutions](#) - King County CPA #[5789027](#) (Piggyback [National IPA Contract](#))
- [Coastwide Laboratories](#) – King County CPA#[5599098](#) (Piggyback [Washington State contract 00812](#))
- [Waxie Sanitary Supply](#) – King County CPA#[5742832](#) (Piggyback on [Washington State contract 00812](#))

## Certified Cleaning Products

- [EcoLogo, UL Environment Certified Cleaning Products list](#)
- [Green Seal Certified Cleaning Products list](#)